



Rural Planning and Economic Development

On the Origins of Ruralism

From Antiquity to Appalachia

September 2, 2026 | Tyler Hinkle, AICP

Start with your homework

What do you define as being rural, urban, or Appalachia? Where do these terms come from, how do they interface/compare, and what future do you see for these spaces and their places?

Ruralism

Rural settings include many kinds of open territory and working landscapes.

The lecture's question is how these spaces relate to settlements and shared life.

Avoid reducing rural to farming or open land alone.



Suburbanism

Suburbanism is the fusion of development.

Separated uses and longer trips shape daily travel.

Roads, cul-de-sacs and surface parking dominate many of these landscapes.



Urbanism

Urbanism is not confined to large cities.

Small towns can support dense, connected public life.

We will examine what gathering together makes possible.



To Have Ruralism We Must Have Urbanism

To Have Urbanism We Must Have Ruralism

Suburbanism Is A Threat To Both

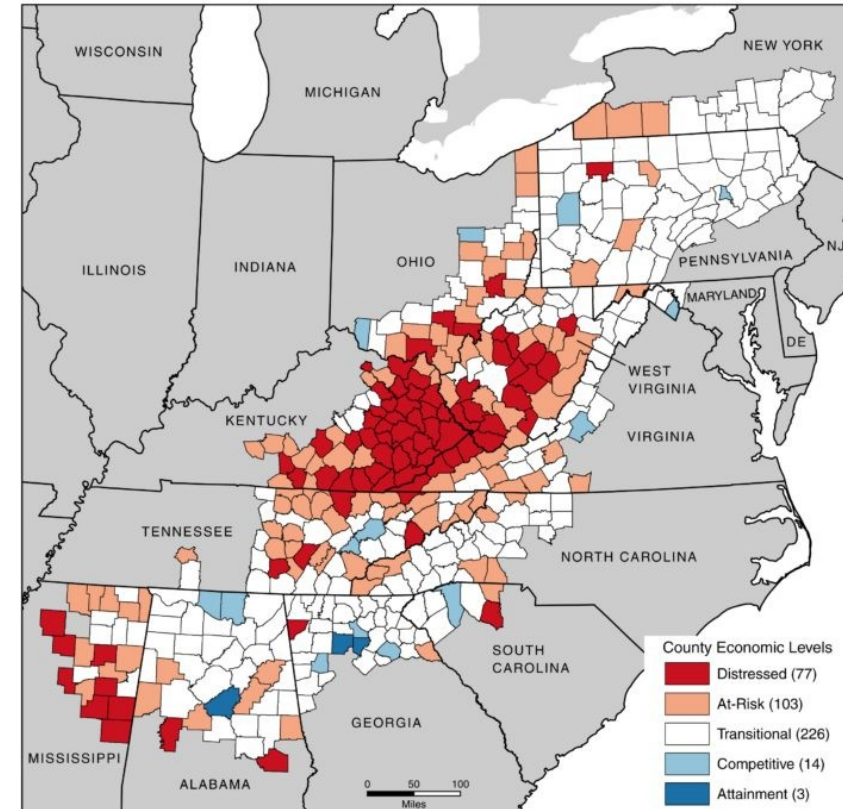
“the town only exists as a town in relation to a form of life lower than its own.” – Spiro Kostof

Appalachia

Appalachia has physical, administrative and lived cultural boundaries.

Those boundaries need not coincide.

Which definition helps answer the question you are asking?



Created by the Appalachian Regional Commission, June 2024
 Data Sources:
 Unemployment data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS, 2020–2022
 Income data: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, LAPI, 2022
 Poverty data: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018–2022

Effective October 1, 2024
 through September 30, 2025

Why Appalachia?

Terrain, waterways and transport routes concentrate settlement.

Resource economies connect local places to larger systems.

These relationships make Appalachia a useful starting point for our work.



Is it rural if everything is rural?

Rural and urban are relational terms.

The earliest human settlements connected shelter, movement, resources, and shared life.

When does gathering begin to change the character of a place?



Early permanent settlement



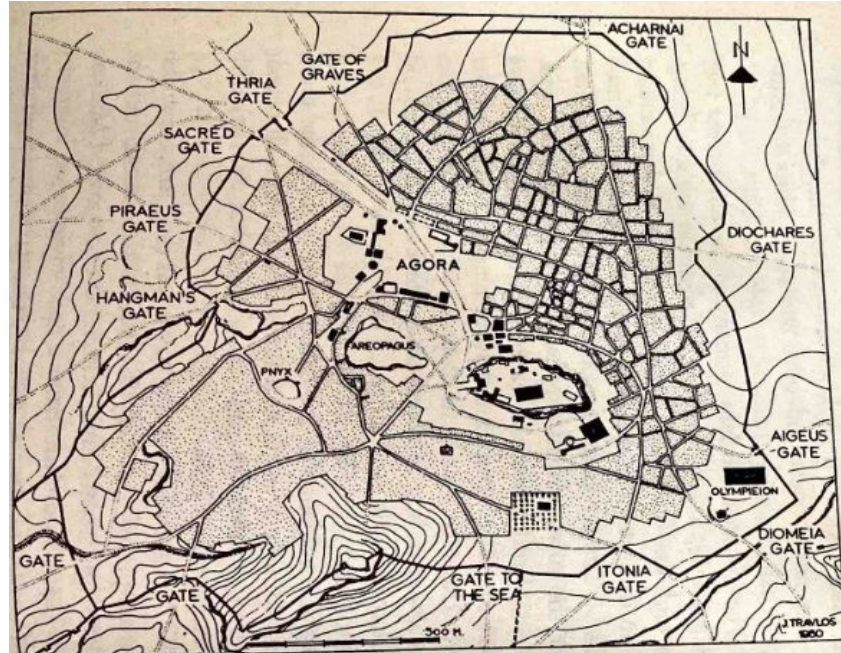
Göbekli Tepe invites questions about gathering and monumental construction. Çatalhöyük invites questions about close settlement, shared edges, and movement across roofs.

Enclosure and collective life



Derinkuyu offers a later example of extensive underground refuge and shared facilities. Use it to examine enclosure, access, and collective safety.

Early city formation



Accretion builds places through successive additions and adjustments. Civic life changes; the physical city responds. A coherent place need not come from one master vision.

Accretion as city building

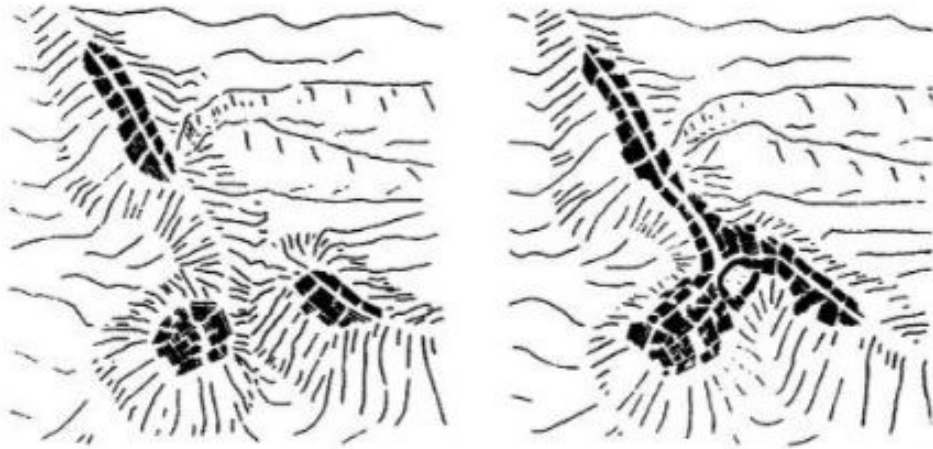
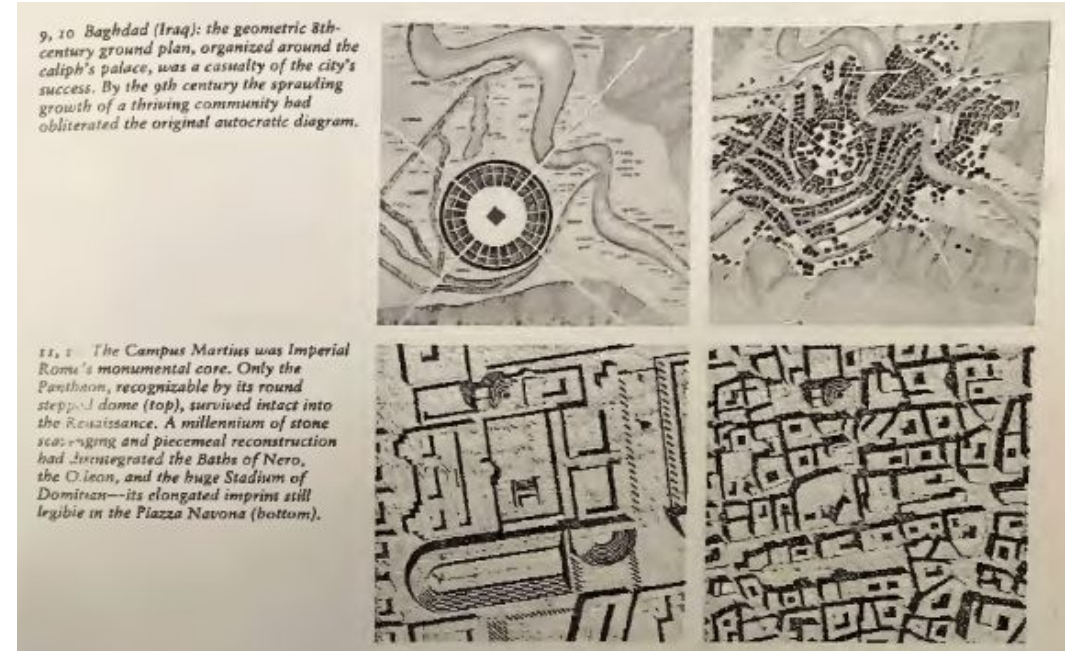
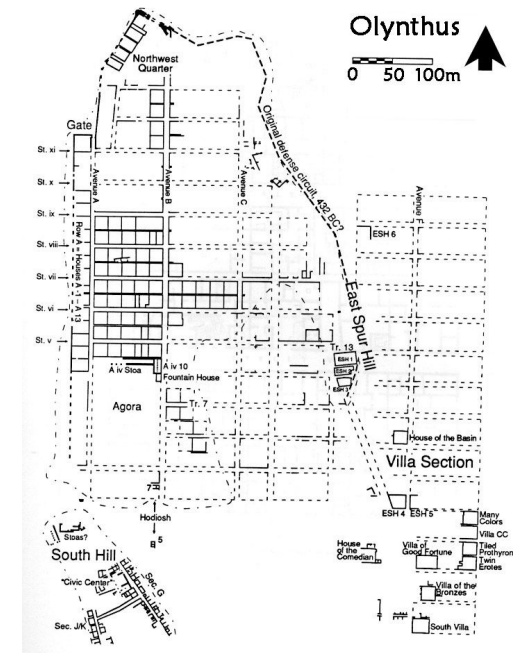
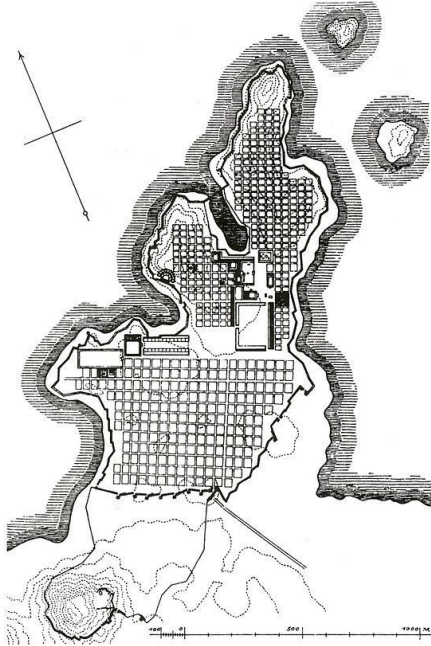


Fig. 4. The process of synoecism, illustrated by the merging of the villages of Castelveccchio (Citta), Camollia, and Castelmontone (San Martino) to form the city of Siena. (Drawing: R.Tobias.)



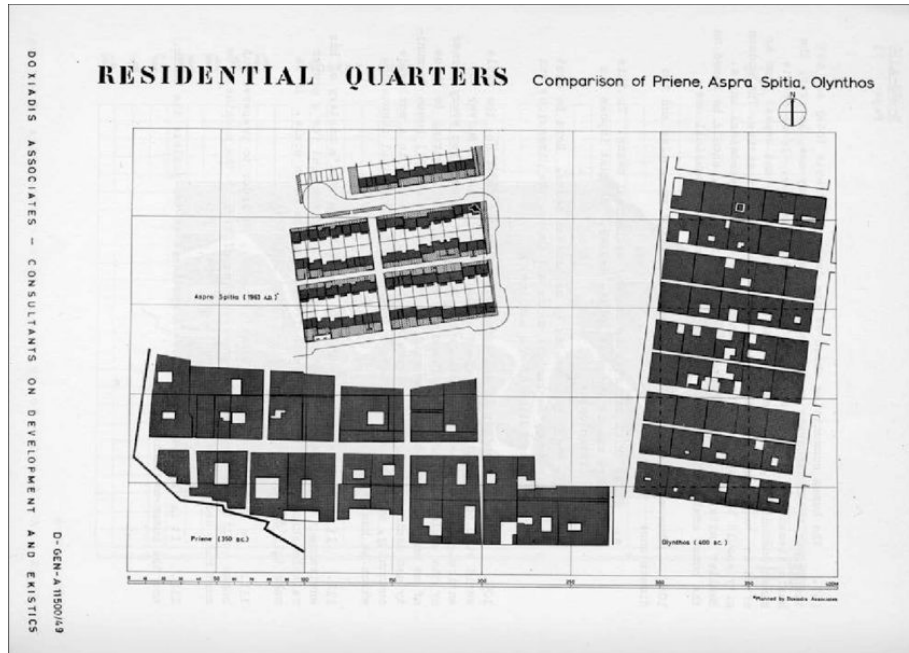
Settlement joins a continuing chain of decisions. A town and its countryside respond to one another over time. Look for accumulated choices before assuming there was no planning.

Hippodamus of Miletus



A grid makes land division easier. The design challenge is fitting civic life and local conditions into it. Regularity is a tool, not a complete city.

The Grid As A Means Of Efficiency



A repeated grid can speed settlement and make routes legible. Markets and entrances help organize advantage and activity.

Blocks, grids and movement



Regular blocks simplify some kinds of division and orientation. Irregular routes may record older uses, rights, terrain, and defensive choices. Compare what each pattern enables and constrains.

The Streets



Many ancient streets were narrow; important routes could be wider. Read street width together with movement, frontage and civic use. Wycherley offers a historical comparison, not a modern design standard.

Past Inspires Present



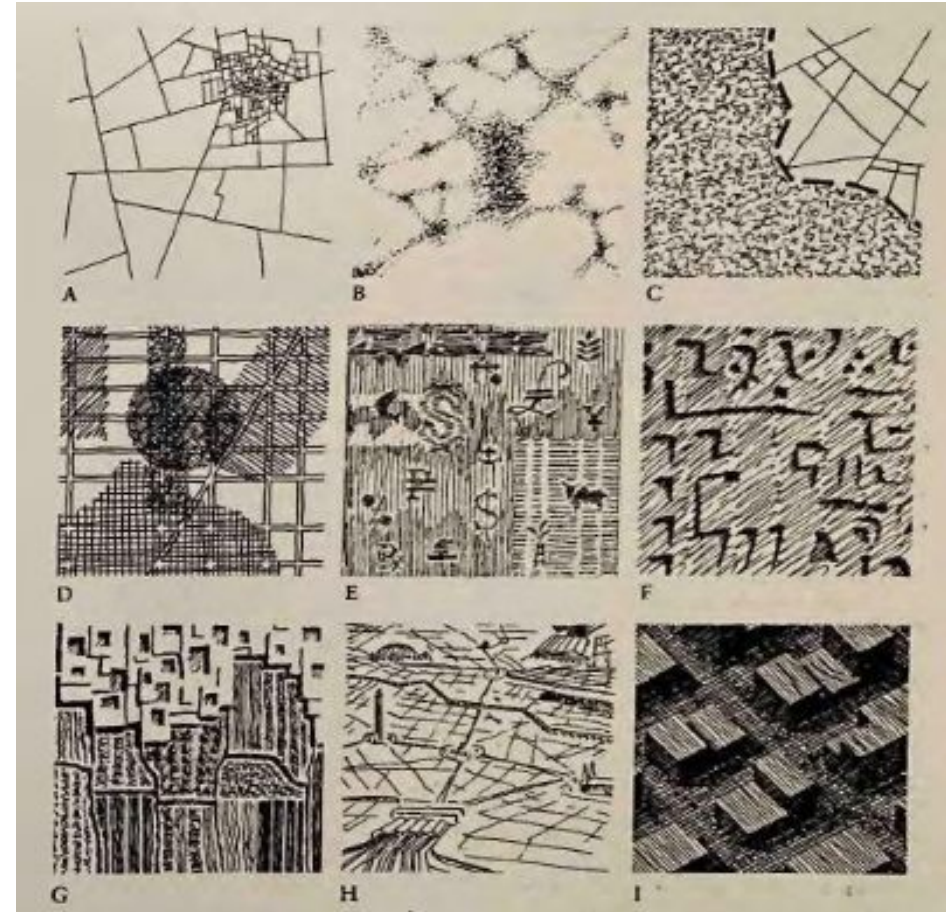
City building repeatedly borrows and adapts earlier ideas. What persists is a relationship, not necessarily an identical form. Which inherited pattern still solves a problem today?

What is a city?

Crowding, differentiated work, public identity and recordkeeping matter together.

Cities exist in networks and depend on a surrounding territory.

Buildings and people must be understood together.



Who makes the city?

An irregular plan still records human decisions.

Earlier occupation, terrain, private rights and collective choices leave spatial traces.

Ask whose decisions became durable.



Power designs cities

Control over land changes what can be planned and built.

Large interventions and incremental changes distribute influence differently.

Whose preferences are visible in the finished pattern?

Why Did The Urban Form Disappear?

"The villain in the pathological deterioration of the urban fabric that much of this literature decries is the Industrial Revolution, and the proposed action is to abandon the sick, overcrowded cities as dead, or to eradicate their "infected" parts, namely, the slums." Kostof 53

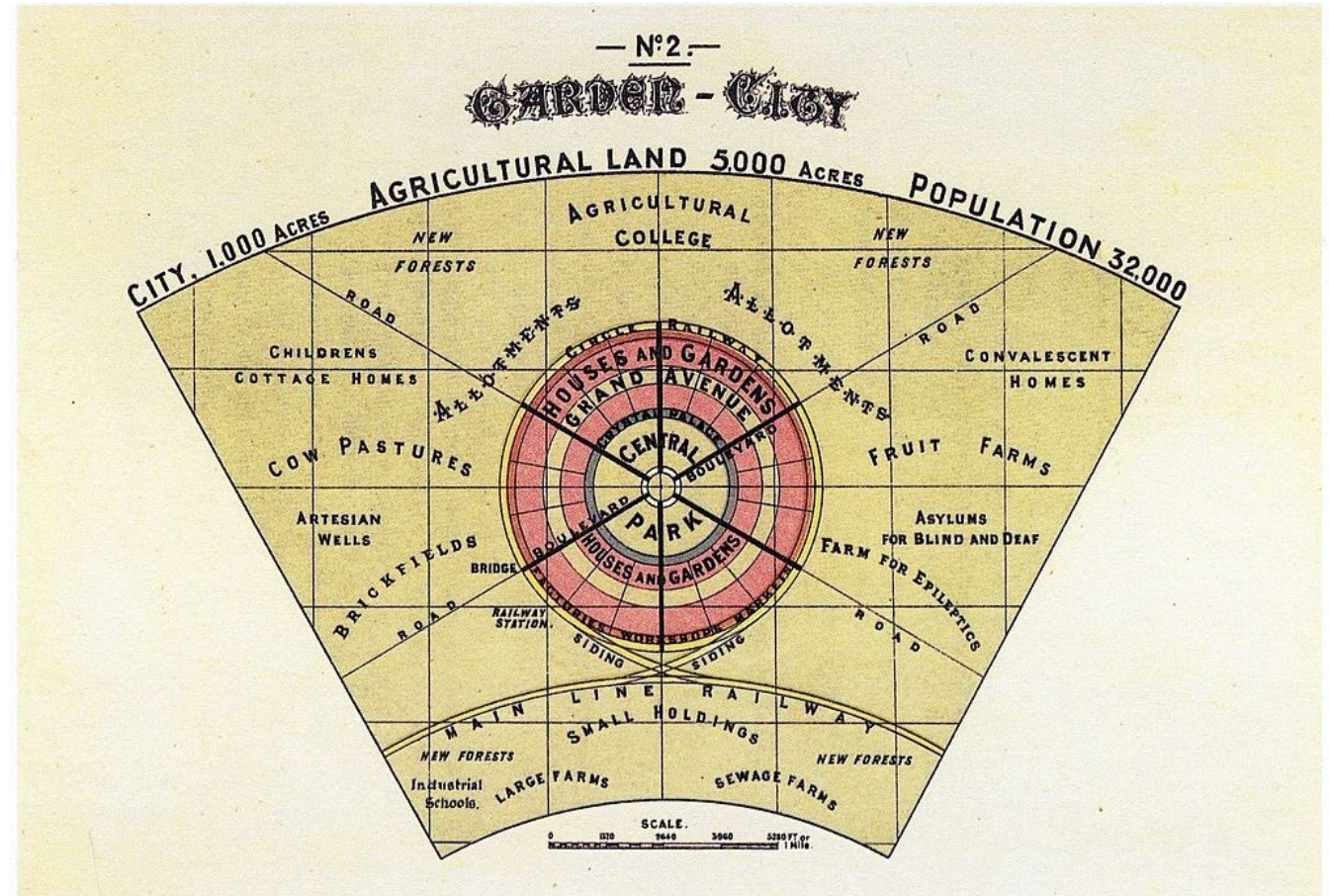


Suburban sprawl was always the issue

Industrial change prompted new arguments about city life.

Ebenezer Howard's Garden City joined settlement and countryside in a regional model.

How did later development retain or lose that relationship?



Opportunity



Industrial employment drew people toward new centers of work. Rapid housing demand changed density, building types and settlement form. Economic opportunity and urban form remade one another.

Deliberate Intention To Abandon The Cities And Colonize The Countryside

Following the advent of the automobile it became increasingly easy for someone to live somewhere and work somewhere else, with the time spent in between in an automobile with little to no other humans.

Echoes of the past continued into the present



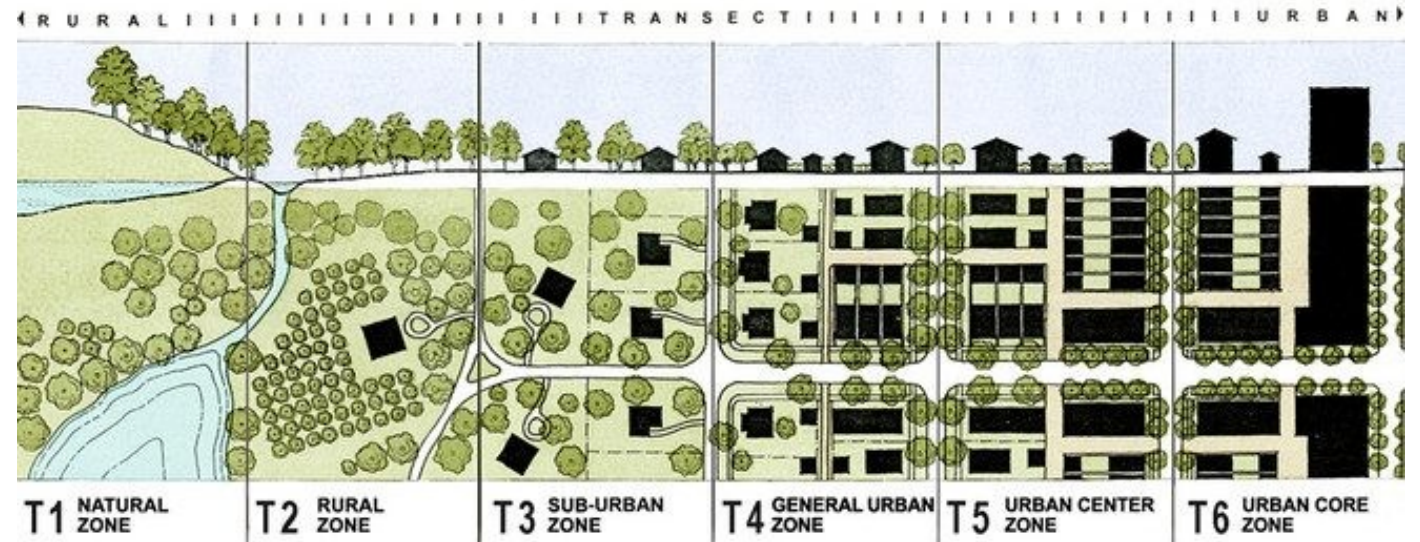
Speed, efficiency and control shaped transport and settlement. Resource-based places depended on connections to outside markets. When those systems changed, towns faced new choices about their future.

New Urbanism

People seek different kinds of places and ways of living.

The planning question is whether a region offers meaningful choices.

How can those choices connect rather than isolate people?

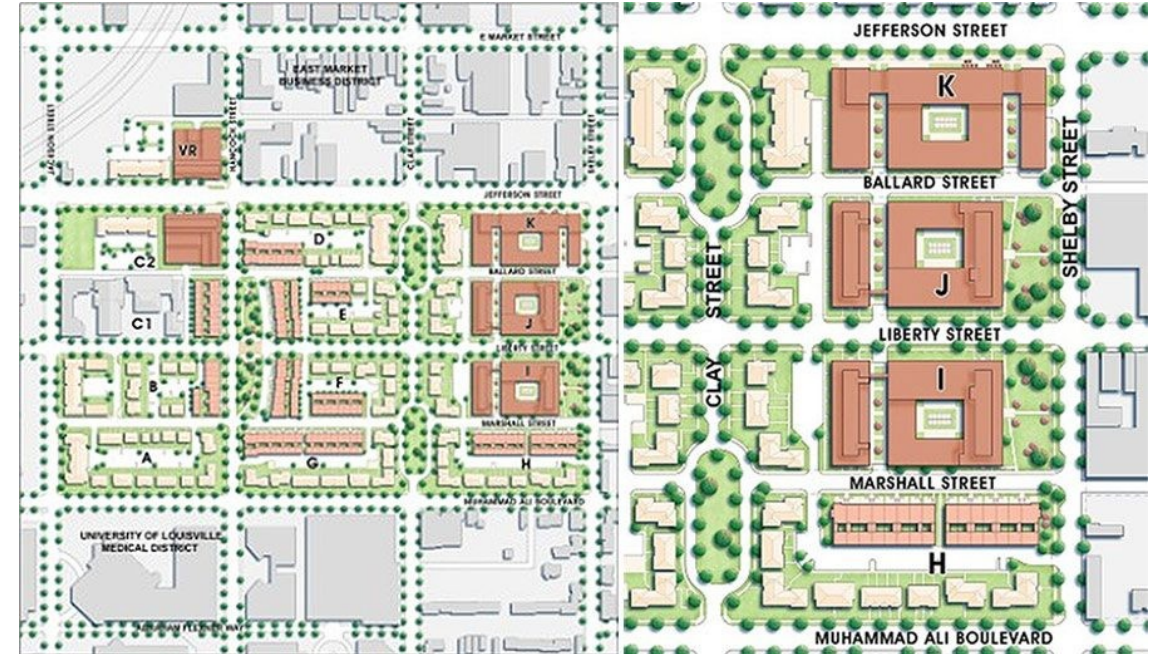


Early New Urbanism Focused Too Much On Greenfields



Early New Urbanist greenfield projects raised a hard question: who benefits from a new place? Compare creating a settlement with reinvesting in an existing community.

Adaptation is the real ingenuity

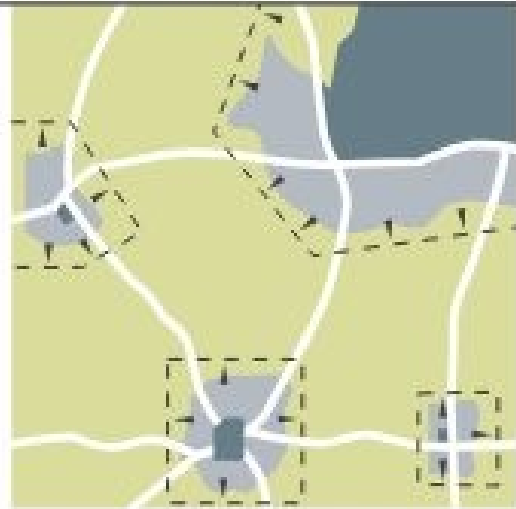


A borrowed pattern must work with existing people, institutions and conditions. Returning to an older form does not mean copying it without judgment.

Regional Planning Methods



Pattern



Application: Madison, Wisconsin 1993



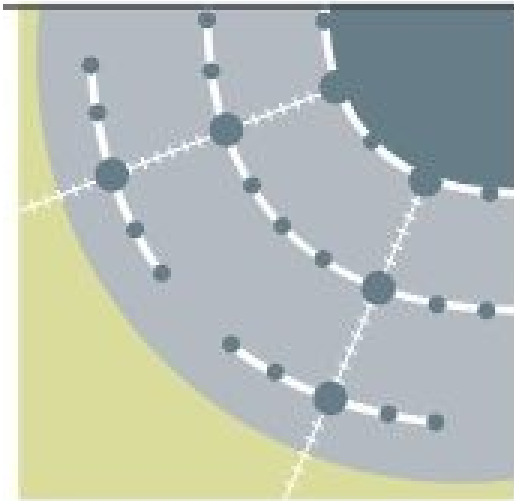
Pattern



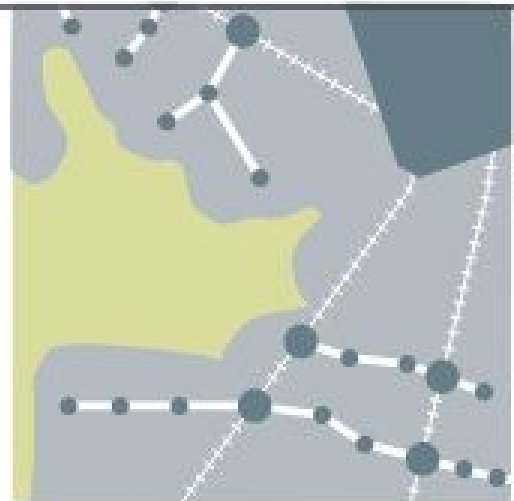
Application: Baltimore, Maryland 1950

Urban boundary: concentrate growth. Rural boundary: protect key landscapes. Transit-oriented nodes: connect compact centers.

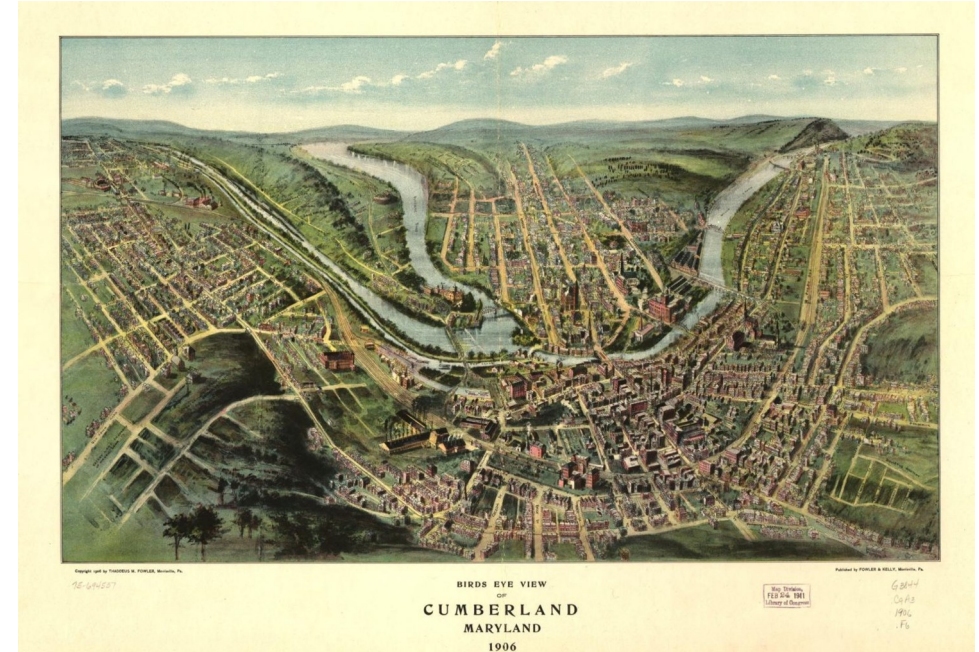
Regional Planning Methods - continued



Pattern



Application: Portland, Oregon 2020



Urban boundary: concentrate growth. Rural boundary: protect key landscapes. Transit-oriented nodes: connect compact centers.

Places

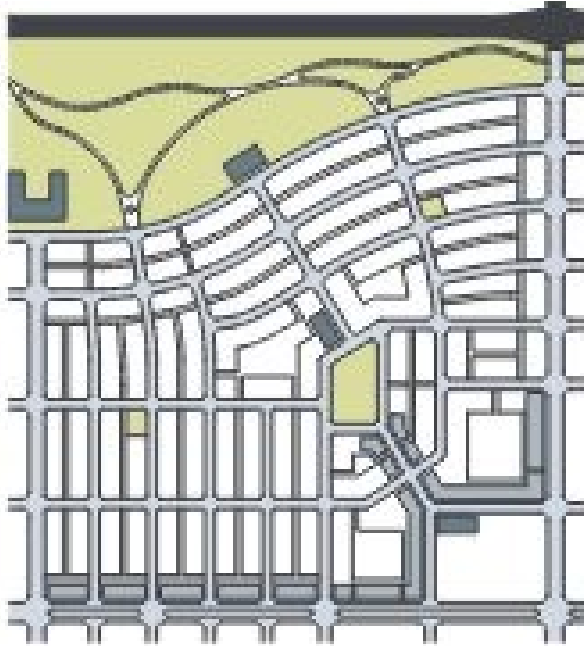
A hamlet can be read as an
emerging neighborhood.

A village combines more of the functions of a complete neighborhood.

Compare their centers,
connections and relationship to
surrounding land.

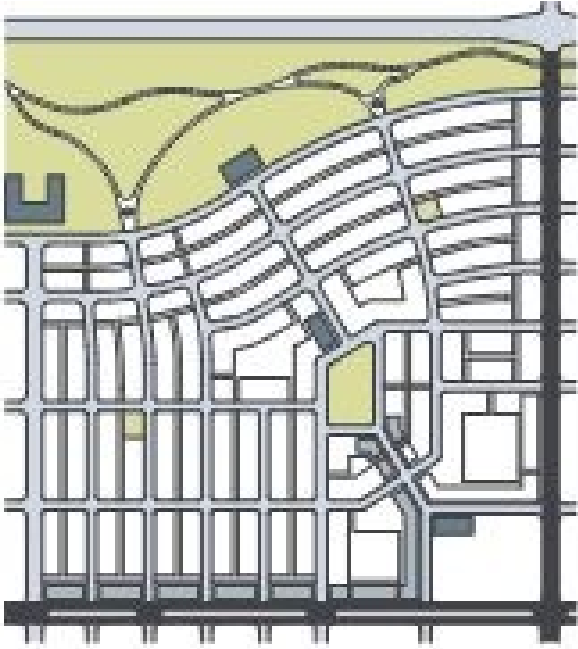


Transportation Is Tied To Land Use



Movement: highways, boulevards, avenues, roads and streets. Edges and service: drives, rear lanes and alleys. Pedestrian links: paths and passages.

Transportation Is Tied To Land Use - continued



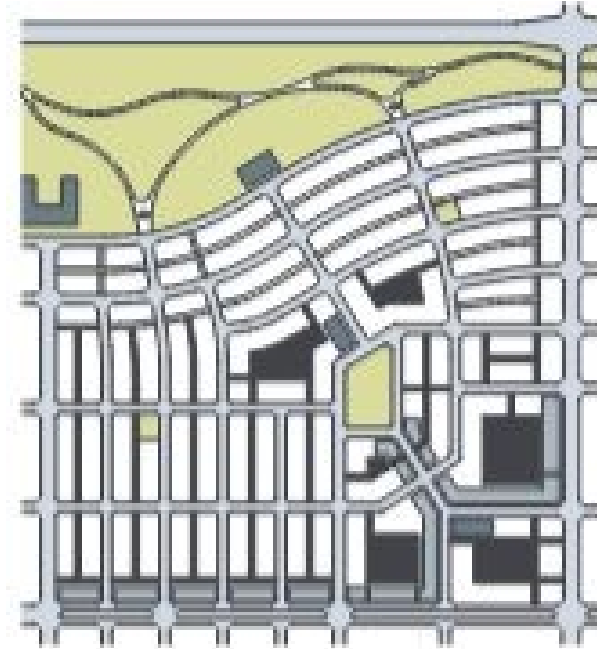
Movement: highways, boulevards, avenues, roads and streets. Edges and service: drives, rear lanes and alleys. Pedestrian links: paths and passages.

Transportation Is Tied To Land Use - continued



Movement: highways, boulevards, avenues, roads and streets. Edges and service: drives, rear lanes and alleys. Pedestrian links: paths and passages.

Transportation Is Tied To Land Use - continued



Movement: highways, boulevards, avenues, roads and streets. Edges and service: drives, rear lanes and alleys. Pedestrian links: paths and passages.

Transportation Is Tied To Land Use - continued



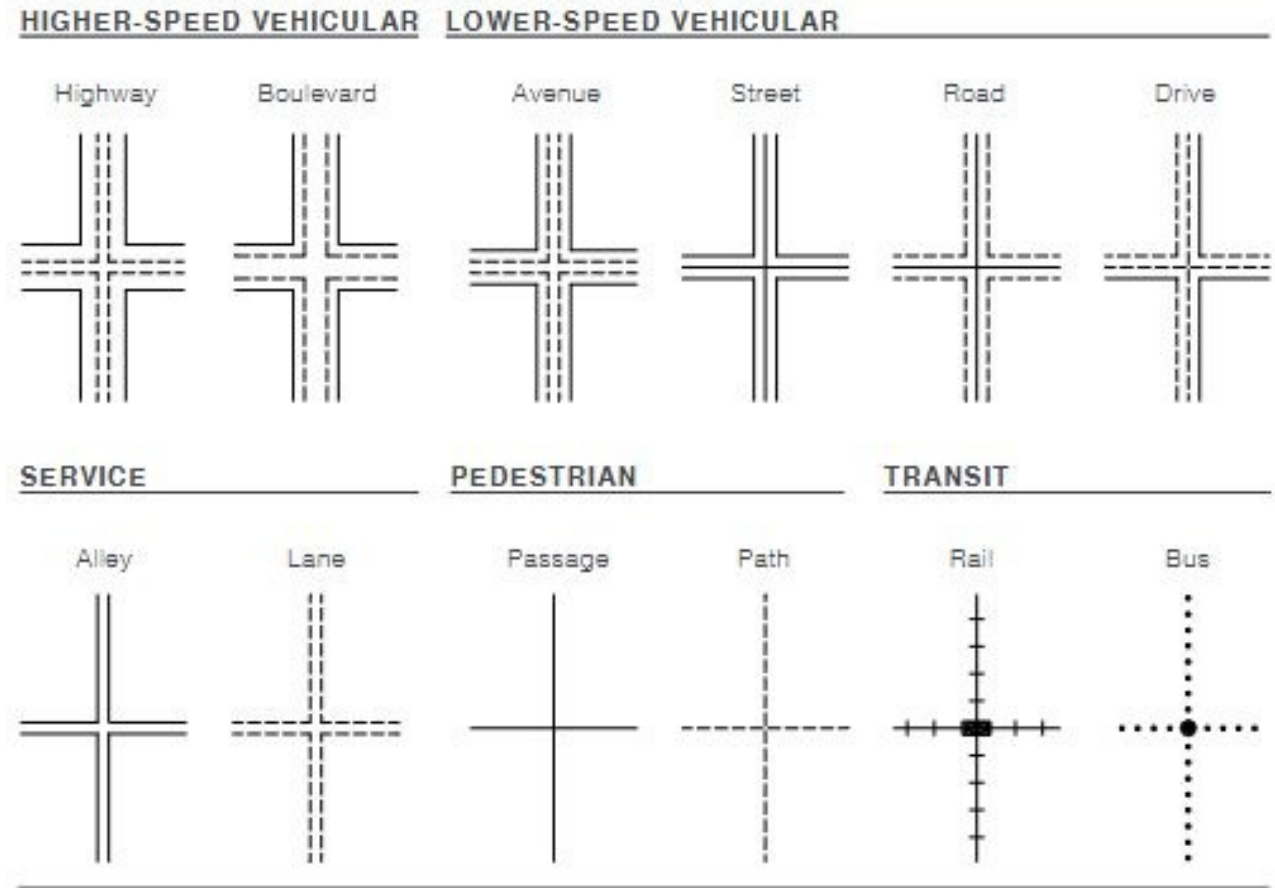
Movement: highways, boulevards, avenues, roads and streets. Edges and service: drives, rear lanes and alleys. Pedestrian links: paths and passages.

Transportation Is Tied To Land Use - continued

Movement: highways, boulevards, avenues, roads and streets.

Edges and service: drives, rear lanes and alleys.

Pedestrian links: paths and passages.

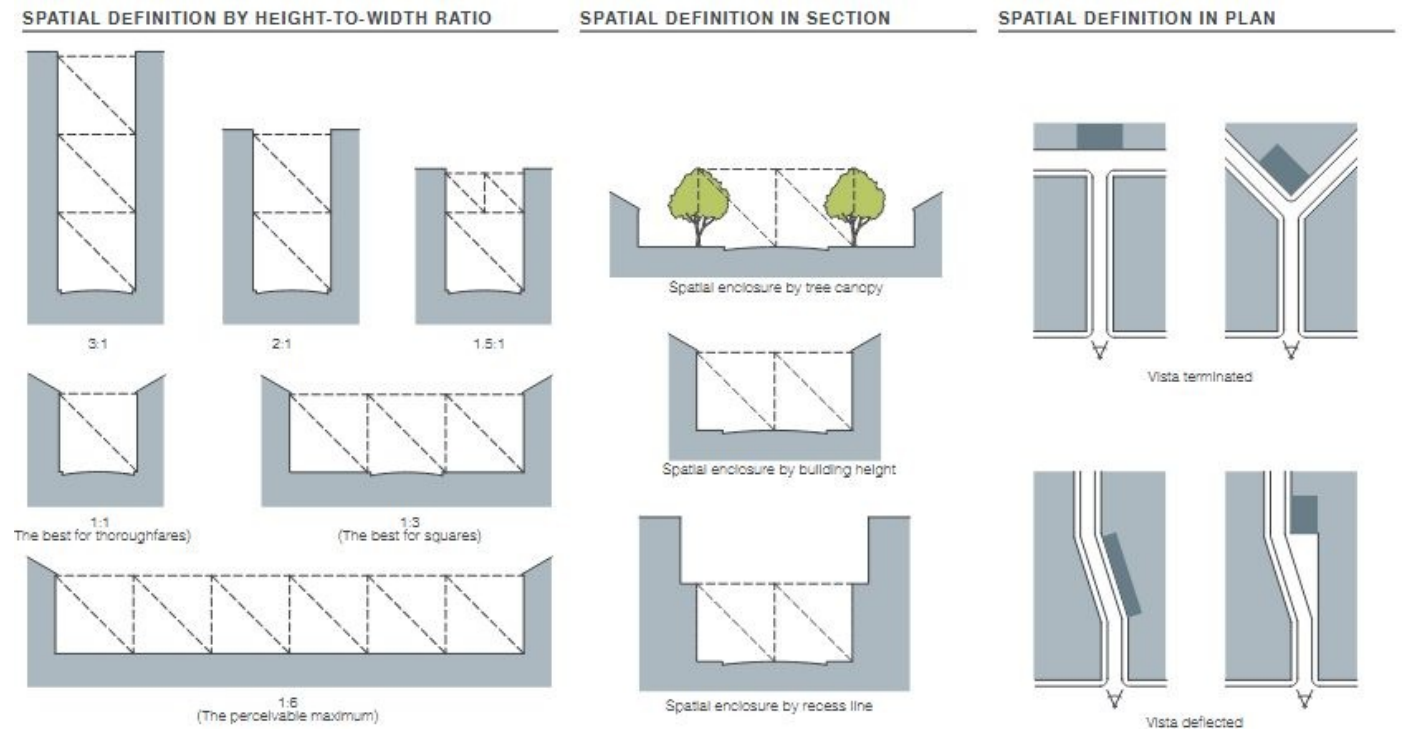


Sense of Place

Aligned frontages and building-to-street proportions create enclosure.

Compare the experience of a defined space with an open edge.

Proportion alone does not prove a real-estate premium.



Growth and planning leave different traces



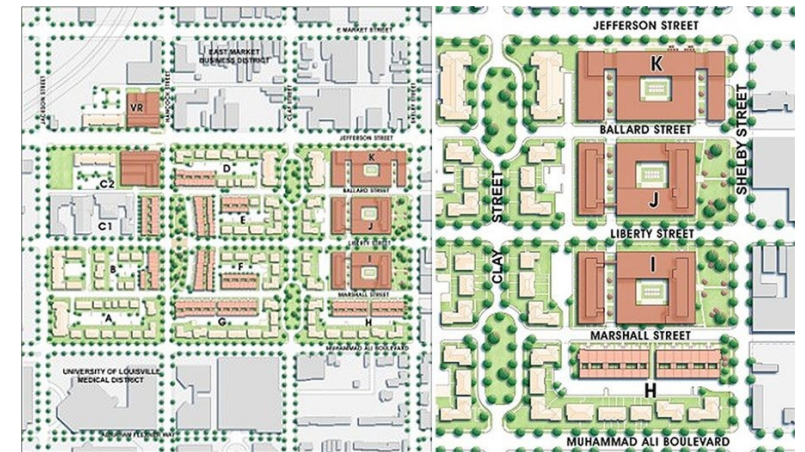
Explain the relationship in words, then test it against the evidence.

What the readings ask us to notice

Needs and ways of life shape built form.

Regular patterns still require adaptation.

A place's institutions and territory belong in the explanation.

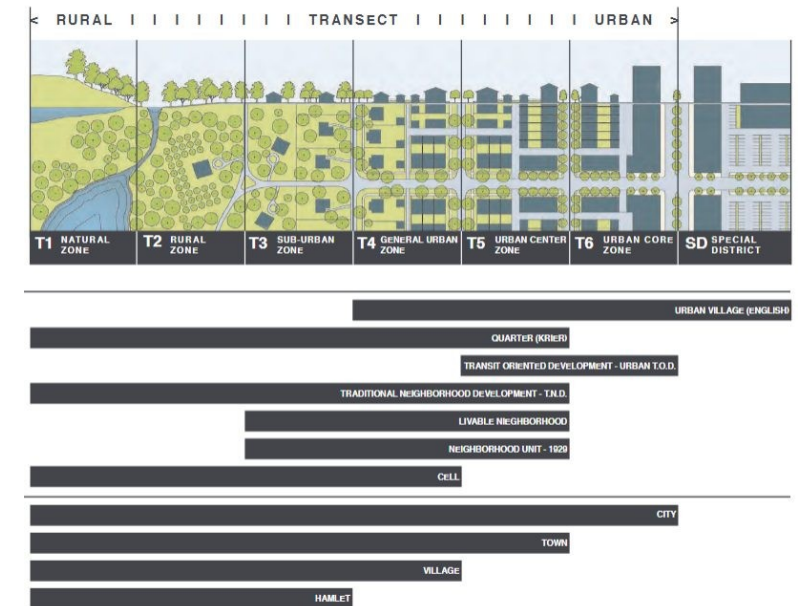


The place and its territory

A market concentrates exchange.

Its food, work, resources and customers reach beyond the built-up area.

Use the relationship to revisit the rural–urban distinction.

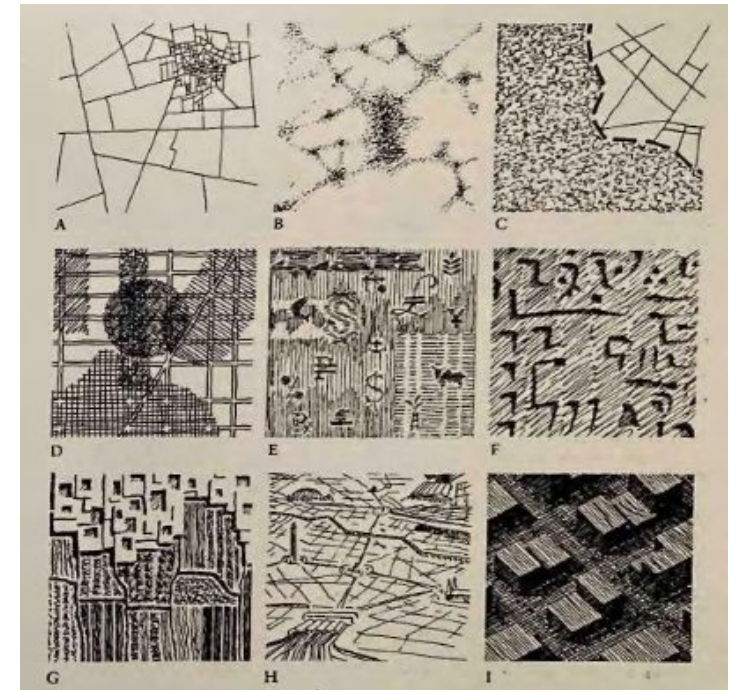


Physical form and civic life

A plan can show streets and buildings.

The explanation also needs institutions, shared practices and power.

What would a map alone leave out?



Vote on project preferences

Submit your individual ranking.

I'll announce your teams in our next class.



Scan to rank your projects